PRESIDENT'S COMMISSION

ON THE

ASSASSINATION OF PRESIDENT KENNEDY

Dallas, Texas
Thursday, July 23, 1964
3:15 p.m.

The President's Commission met, pursuant to recess, at 3:15 p.m., in the office of the U. S. Attorney, 301 Post Office Building, Bryan and Ervay Streets, Dallas, Texas.

PRESENT:

Wesley J.Liebeler, Staff Counsel

Helen Laidrich, Reporter.

P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. LIEBELER: Would you rise and raise your right hand? Do you solemnly swear that the testimony you are about to give will be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

MR. ~~TEAGUE~~ TAGUE: I do.

MR. LIEBELER: My name is Wesley J. Liebeler. I am an attorney on the staff of the President's Commission investigating the assassination of President Kennedy.

I have been authorized to take your testimony by the Commission pursuant to authority granted to it by President Johnson's Executive Order 11130 dated November 29, 1963, and Joint Resolution of Congress No. 137.

Under the Commission's Rules of Procedure, you are entitled to have an attorney present, and you are entitled to three days notice of the hearing, and you are entitled to the usual privileges so far as not answering questions are concerned.

Since you are here without an attorney, I presume that you are prepared to go ahead without the presence of counsel?

MR. TEAGUE: Yes.

MR. LIEBELER: Would you state your name for the record?

MR. TEAGUE: James Thomas Teague.

MR. LIEBELER: What is your address?

MR. TEAGUE: My address is 700 West Euless in Euless, Texas.

MR. LIEBELER: What is your employment?

MR. TEAGUE: I am a salesman for Cedar Springs Dodge.

MR. LIEBELER: Here in Dallas?

MR. TEAGUE: Dallas, yes.

MR. LIEBELER: When were you born?

MR. TEAGUE: October 17, 1936.

MR. LIEBELER: It is my understanding that you were in the vicinity of the Texas School Book Depository Building at the time of the assassination, is that correct?

MR. TEAGUE: That's correct, yes sir.

MR. LIEBELER: Would you tell us how you happened to be there and what you saw, and what happened.

MR. TEAGUE: I was going downtown to pick up my wife -- she was my girl that I was going with at the time -- to take her to lunch, and I accidentally came upon ~~her~~ the motorcade.

I was not planning to watch the parade or anything. There were several cars stopped in front of me, and I stopped there myself under the Triple Underpass and got out and was standing there just, oh, about a minute before the President's car came by.

MR. LIEBELER: Where was your car actually located now?

MR. TEAGUE: The nose of the car was sticking out from

underneath the Triple Underpass.

MR. LIEBELER: What street were you on?

MR. TEAGUE: What is the furtherest street to the south?

MR. LIEBELER: Commerce Street?

MR. TEAGUE: Commerce, yes.

MR. LIEBELER: Commerce Street is a one-way going east?

MR. TEAGUE: Right. That's correct.

MR. LIEBELER: So they stopped all traffic on Commerce Street?

MR. TEAGUE: Cars in the left lane were stopping, the ones next to the curb, and several cars had stopped in front of me, and I stopped.

The car was just halfway out from underneath the underpass, and I got out of my car and stood by the bridge abutment.

MR. LIEBELER: So you were just out from under the Triple Underpass so that you could see the President's car and the motorcade coming on down Elm Street, is that correct?

MR. TEAGUE: That is correct.

MR. LIEBELER: Did you see the motorcade come down Elm Street?

MR. TEAGUE: Yes, I did.

MR. LIEBELER: Go ahead and tell us what you saw.

MR. TEAGUE: Well, I was standing there watching, and really I was watching to try to distinguish the President

and his car.

About this time I heard what sounded like a firecracker. Well, a very loud firecracker. It certainly didn't sound like a rifle shot. It was more of a loud cannon type sound. I looked around to see who was throwing firecrackers or what was going on and I turned my head away from the motorcade and of course, two more shots.

And I ducked behind the post when I realized somebody was shooting after the third shot. After the third shot, I ducked behind the bridge abutment and was there for a second, and I glanced out and just as I looked out, the car following the President's car, the one with the Secret Service men, was just flying past at that time.

MR. LIEBELER: Going on Elm Street under the Triple Underpass?

MR. TEAGUE: Right. Going on Elm. So I stood there looking around. I looked up -- there was a motorcycle policeman, and he stopped and had drawn his gun and was running up the embankment toward the railroad tracks.

A crowd of people, several people, were starting to come down into that area where he was running, and the people pointing, and excitement up there and so on, and about that time a patrolman who evidently had been stationed under the Triple Underpass walked up and said, "What happened?" and I said, "I don't know; something."

And we walked up to the -- by this time the motorcycle policeman returned back close to where his motorcycle was, and we walked up there and there was a man standing there. Seeing that he was very excited -- I don't remember his name -- at the time I did have it on the tip of my tongue -- very excited saying he was watching the president and it seemed like his head just exploded. This was a couple or three minutes after this happened.

And the patrolman said,"Well, I saw something fly off back on the street."

We walked back down there, and another man joined us who identified himself as the deputy sheriff, who was in civilian clothes, and I guess this was three or four minutes after. I don't know how to gauge time on something like that.

And I says, "Well, you know now, I recall something stunning me on the face while I was standing down there."

And he looked up and he said, "Yes, you have blood there on your cheek."

And I reached up and there was a couple of drops of blood. And he said,"Where were you standing?"

And I says, "Right down here." We walked 15 feet away when this deputy sheriff said, "Look here on the curb." There was a mark quite obviously that was a bullet, and it was very fresh.

We turned around and we looked back up to see where this possibly have come from, and the policeman thought he had seen something over here.

MR. LIEBELER: ~~Well, now,~~ I have some pictures here and I will show you to indicate these places. ~~I have a picture here,~~ an aerial view of the whole area, Commission Exhibit 354. Of course, the Texas School Book Depository Building is here on the left, and this is the Triple Underpass here, and this, of course, is Commerce Street going toward the east.

As I understand it, your car was just nosed out in the left hand lane of Commerce Street and was just out from under the railroad tracks that go over the Triple Underpass, so the nose of your car was on the easternmost portion, on the eastern side of the railroad tracks that go over the Triple Underpass, is that correct?

MR. TEAGUE: That is correct.

MR. LIEBELER: Now did you get out of your car?

MR. TEAGUE: Right.

MR. LIEBELER: What did you do? Did you stay near your car or did you walk on the area toward the grassy plaza?

MR. TEAGUE: I was standing three or four feet in front of the concrete embankment right here (pointing).

MR. LIEBELER: Let's make a number six on this picture as to where you were standing. This is the concrete strip

that runs between Commerce and Main Street right here?

MR. TEAGUE: I was standing about right there.

MR. LIEBELER: At number six?

MR. TEAGUE: Yes; right.

MR. LIEBELER: Now, that is where you were standing when you apparently got hit with this flying, whatever it was?

MR. TEAGUE: Right.

MR. LIEBELER: Then after you had run into this deputy sheriff, you looked along the street and you saw what you thought to be a mark made by a --

MR. TEAGUE: A motorcycle was parked here and the policeman was here on the grass right here, and there was a swarm of people around him.

MR. LIEBELER: At number seven. Let's put a number seven there.

MR. TEAGUE: This man was relating his story of how he was standing right there as he witnessed the facts. He said it looked like the President's head exploded.

And I said I felt something hit me. We walked down here.

MR. LIEBELER: Towards number six?

MR. TEAGUE: Right. When we got within about 20 feet, the deputy sheriff spotted the place about 12 to 15 feet out from the embankment on the curb, and turned around, and we

looked up here where the policeman originally ran up on the grass here.

MR. LIEBELER: There is an area circled here with the letter C in it. Is that where the policeman ran toward the grassy area; included in that circle, is that right?

MR. TEAGUE: Right. I pointed this out, and we turned around and looked toward the School Book Depository, and from the reflection of the sun it was something on the window.

Not the -- well, it is maybe five or six windows which were open, which it was not the window that proved to be where the shots were fired, but it was a different window like it had spider webs or dust, and maybe shots had come through the window.

We said maybe this is where they came from. And the deputy sheriff ran back to the policeman. I may not be quite accurate, but I believe at the time there was a whole swarm of motorcycle policemen coming back to the area under the underpass going the wrong way here on Elm.

They came back and parked, and he mentioned to them -- that is probably five minutes after it happened, and he was on the radio, and everybody ran up around the School Book Depository at this time.

MR. LIEBELER: Now, let's go back and fix the general spot when the deputy sheriff saw the mark on the street, going back to point six, which is where you were standing when

you were hit. We go east along --

MR. TEAGUE: Right here is the curb.

MR. LIEBELER: There is a curb that runs along --

MR. TEAGUE: About 12 to 15 feet right on the top of round of the curb, was the mark that very definitely was fresh, and I would say it was a mark of a bullet.

MR. LIEBELER: ~~Let's put a number eight there where you saw this mark, approximately~~. You say it is about 15 or 20 feet east of where you were standing?

MR. TEAGUE: No, about 12 to 15 feet.

MR. LIEBELER: East of where you were standing?

MR. TEAGUE: Right.

MR. LIEBELER: At point six?

MR. TEAGUE: Right.

MR. LIEBELER: So we have the point fixed there, and we can just estimate 12 to 15 feet east on Main Street, is that right?

MR. TEAGUE: That's correct.

MR. LIEBELER: That would have been on the south curb of Main Street, is that right?

MR. TEAGUE: It would have been on the south curb.

MR. LIEBELER: About 12 to 15 feet east of the point number six on Commission Exhibit No. 354.

Now you yourself, as I understand it, did not see the President hit?

MR. TEAGUE: I did not, no.

MR. LIEBELER: How long after did you feel yourself get hit by anything?

MR. TEAGUE: I felt it at the time, but I didn't associate, didn't make any connection, and ignored it.

And after this happened, or maybe the second or third shot, I couldn't tell you definitely -- I made no connection. I looked around wondering what was going on, and I recall this. We got to talking, and I recall that something had stunned me, and then the deputy sheriff looked up and said, "You have blood there on your cheek."

That is when we walked back down there.

MR. LIEBELER: Do you have any idea which bullet might have made that mark?

MR. TEAGUE: I would guess it was either the second or third. I wouldn't say definitely on which one.

MR. LIEBELER: Did you hear any more shots after you felt yourself get hit in the face?

MR. TEAGUE: I believe I did.

MR. LIEBELER: You think you did?

MR. TEAGUE: I believe I did.

MR. LIEBELER: How many?

MR. TEAGUE: I believe that it was the second shot, so I heard the third shot afterwards.

MR. LIEBELER: Did you hear three shots?

MR. TEAGUE: I heard three shots, yes sir. And I did

notice the time on the Hertz clock. It was 12:29.

MR. LIEBELER: That was about the time that you felt yourself struck?

MR. TEAGUE: I just glanced. I mean I just stopped, got out of my car, and here came the motorcade. I just happened upon the scene.

MR. LIEBELER: Now I understand that you went back there subsequently and took some pictures of the area, isn't that right?

MR. TEAGUE: Pardon?

MR. LIEBELER: I understand that you went back subsequently and took some pictures of the area.

MR. TEAGUE: Yes, about a month ago.

MR. LIEBELER: With a motion picture camera?

MR. TEAGUE: Yes. I didn't know anybody knew about that.

MR. LIEBELER: I show you Baker Exhibit No. 1, and ask you if you took that picture.

MR. TEAGUE: No, not to my knowledge.

MR. LIEBELER: Now in point of fact, that picture was taken by another individual with a motion picture camera, and the picture is not quite as striking as I thought. I confused the picture taken by somebody else with the picture I thought you had taken.

You yourself did take pictures of the area about a month ago?

MR. TEAGUE: Yes. My wife and I were going to Indianapolis. This is the home of my parents. I was taking some pictures of the area to show to them. This was the latter part of May.

MR. LIEBELER: Did you look at the curb at that time to see if the mark was still there?

MR. TEAGUE: Yes.

MR. LIEBELER: Was it still there?

MR. TEAGUE: Not that I could tell.

MR. LIEBELER: Did you meet a newspaper photographer that day and talk to him at all about the assassination?

MR. TEAGUE: The day of the assassination?

MR. LIEBELER: Yes.

MR. TEAGUE: Not that I can recall. I left the area down there at about a quarter to one, and the officer there told me to go to the police headquarters and report to somebody down there and tell them what I had seen.

MR. LIEBELER: Did you do that?

MR. TEAGUE: I did that.

MR. LIEBELER: Now referring to Baker Exhibit No. 1, does that look like it might have been taken from approximately the place where you were standing at the time you got hit, from the same general area?

MR. TEAGUE: I believe I was back further to the left, back down this way further.

MR. LIEBELER: That is further toward the west?

MR. TEAGUE: Yes.

MR. LIEBELER: Further down toward the Triple Underpass?

MR. TEAGUE: That's right.

MR. LIEBELER: Did it appear to you that the lamp post that is showing right here on the right hand side of Baker Exhibit No. 1 is the very end of the grassy area described by Commerce Street and Main Street, and right down toward the concrete embankment?

MR. TEAGUE: It might possibly be.

MR. LIEBELER: Are you able to tell for sure by looking at Baker Exhibit No. 1?

MR. TEAGUE: No.

MR. LIEBELER: ~~It is pretty hard to tell where it has been taken from.~~ (U1.)

~~Now,~~ I have another picture here that purports to be a picture of a curb with a bullet mark on it, and ask you if (U1.) that looks like what you saw that day.

MR. TEAGUE: It looks similar, but I can't say whether this is the actual one or not, because you can see it appears to be a bullet mark.

MR. LIEBELER: I have initialled this picture, having marked it Teague Exhibit No. 1, and I would like to have you initial it for the purpose of identification.

MR. TEAGUE: (Initials.)

MR. LIEBELER: You indicate that the mark on the curb --

MR. TEAGUE: I can't tell too much which angle of the curb this is or what here.

MR. LIEBELER: That is not a very clear picture either. Actually, I can't figure which way to look at it.

MR. TEAGUE: I can't either.

MR. LIEBELER: It looks like there is a man standing there with a hand along the side of the curb.

MR. TEAGUE: Yes. This looks like the curb here at the back and the sun shining down. The bullet mark was right at the circle of the curb as this here.

MR. LIEBELER: In other words, where the curb turned?

MR. TEAGUE: Right. At the very round, right in the middle of the round.

MR. LIEBELER: That is where the street curb turns when it turns there? I don't understand that. (Looking at Commission Exhibit No. 354.)

MR. TEAGUE: This right here, this picture was taken this way. It would be looking this way.

MR. LIEBELER: I am still at a loss. You indicated there is a turn in the curb at some point along here. Does the curb end and the road go together?

MR. TEAGUE: Here is the curb here I am talking about on the very round.

MR. LIEBELER: On the round top of the curb? The curb itself continues on, but the bullet struck sort of the top

edge of the curb?

MR. TEAGUE: That's right.

MR. LIEBELER: I understand. Did you have any idea where these shots came from when you heard them ringing out?

MR. TEAGUE: Yes. I thought they were coming from my left.

MR. LIEBELER: ~~Well, from your left~~ immediately to your left, or toward the back?

Of course, now we have other evidence that would indicate that the shots did come from the Texas School Book Depository, but see if we can disregard that and determine just what you heard when the shots were fired in the first place.

MR. TEAGUE: To recall everything is almost impossible. Just an impression is all I recall, is the fact that my first impression was that up by the, whatever you call the monument, or whatever it was --

MR. LIEBELER: Up above number seven?

MR. TEAGUE: -- that somebody was throwing firecrackers up there, that the police were running up there to see what was going on, and this was my first impression. Somebody was causing a disturbance, that somebody had drawn a gun and was shooting at the crowd, and the police were running up to it.

When I saw the people throwing themselves on the

ground is when I realized there was serious trouble, and I believe that was after the third shot was fired.

MR. LIEBELER: Your impression of where the shots came from was much the result of the activity near number seven?

MR. TEAGUE: Not when I heard the shots.

MR. LIEBELER: You thought they had come from the area between number seven and five?

MR. TEAGUE: I believe they came from up in here.

MR. LIEBELER: Back in the area C?

MR. TEAGUE: Right.

MR. LIEBELER: Behind the concrete monument here between five and seven, toward the general area of C?

MR. TEAGUE: Yes.

MR. LIEBELER: Did you look up near the rail oad tracks in that area after you heard the shots?

MR. TEAGUE: I looked all around. I looked at the complete area to try to find out where the disturbance was. And for some reason, after the third shot, I believe I ducked down back in here.

MR. LIEBELER: Under the railroad tracks?

MR. TEAGUE: Right. Behind an abutment. And when I stuck my head outside, the Secret Service car was just starting to pass under the underpass.

MR. LIEBELER: The car immediately behind the President. I don't think I have any additional questions. Let me ask

you, did you see any evidence of anybody having fired from the area on the railroad tracks above the Triple Underpass?

MR. TEAGUE: None.

MR. LIEBELER: Do you think that it is consistent with what you heard and saw that day, that the shots could have come from the sixth floor of the Texas School Book Depository?

MR. TEAGUE: Yes.

MR. LIEBELER: There was in fact a considerable echo in that area?

MR. TEAGUE: There was no echo from where I stood. I was asked this question before, and there was no echo.

It was just a loud, oh, not a cannon, but definitely louder and more solid than a rifle shot.

MR. LIEBELER: So you, being in a place where there was no echo, you were able to recognize how many shots there were quite clearly?

MR. TEAGUE: I believe so.

MR. LIEBELER: And you say you heard three shots?

MR. TEAGUE: That is right.

MR. LIEBELER: There has been considerable testimony from people who were standing up near the corner of Elm Street and Houston that it was hard to tell, but of course, you were standing completely across the plaza?

MR. TEAGUE: I can't recall any echo, not at all.

MR. LIEBELER: Do you remember seeing anything else or observing anything else that day that you think would

be helpful to the Commission, that I haven't asked you about?

MR. TEAGUE: Not that I can think of. There is lots of things that you recall about something like that, that you don't recall for certain. What struck me the most was that everybody said all three shots were accounted for. I felt very strongly that the third shot hit down there, and there was the deputy sheriff and the patrolman down under the bridge right there with me.

MR. LIEBELER: Now you say you thought it was the third shot that hit down there?

MR. TEAGUE: No. I said I thought that all three shots were accounted for. All the newspaper accounts for months said all the shots were accounted for.

MR. LIEBELER: In terms of hitting in the car?

MR. TEAGUE: Hitting into the car, yes.

MR. LIEBELER: Well, there was a story in the paper more recently that indicated that one of them might have missed.

MR. TEAGUE: That's right.

MR. LIEBELER: Did you see that?

MR. TEAGUE: That's right, yes.

MR. LIEBELER: Other than that, is there anything that you can think of that you think the Commission should know about of what you heard and saw that day?

MR. TEAGUE: No, I don't know a thing. The only thing that I saw that I thought was wrong was that there was about

five or six or seven minutes in there before anybody done anything about anything.

MR. LIEBELER: That was after the shots were fired?

MR. TEAGUE: That was after the shots were fired.

MR. LIEBELER: What do you mean, "Before they did anything"?

MR. TEAGUE: There was no action taken except for the one policeman that I could see that stopped his motorcycle, and it fell over on him at first, and he got it standing upright and drew his gun, and he was the only one doing anything about it.

MR. LIEBELER: You didn't see any other policemen around in the area?

MR. TEAGUE: Not for four or five minutes.

Oswald was in that building. He had all the time in the world to calmly walk out of there.

MR. LIEBELER: Apparently that is just what he did do. Well, if you can't think of anything else, Mr. Teague, I want to thank you for coming in and for the cooperation you have given us. We appreciate it very much.

MR. TEAGUE: Okay.

(DEPOSITION CONCLUDED)

James Thomas ~~Teague~~ TAGUE.